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Washington Monument

MONOGRAPH,

AS DESIGNED BY

Robinson
HENRY R. SEARLE,
11
ARCHITECT.

WASHINGTON, D. C.

GIBSON BROTHERS, PRINTERS.

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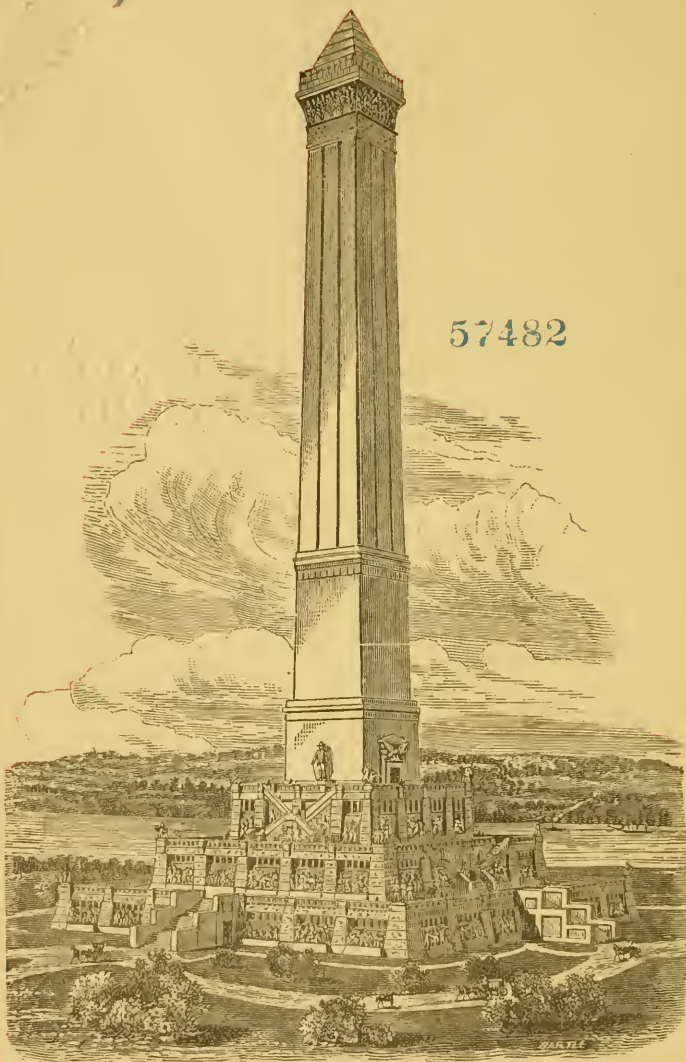
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IN making this design several ideas presented themselves which seemed important to be considered: First, would the foundation sustain the weight of the required height, and especially with the increased localized pressure in a storm of wind; second, the mere obelisk appeared only as an enlarged plagiarism, in no way illustrating the memory of Washington personally, or those connected with him, or the history of this growing country; third, there is nothing whatever æsthetic about it, and nothing that would impress the visitor, whether native or foreign, with the grandeur of the work of Washington and his coadjutors in founding this nation; and, last, to utilize the work already done, so that we should not earn the name of a people who build but to tear down.

The first question was an important one, as it really controlled the whole construction, for if the Monument would not withstand the force of the elements it would be useless to build it.

According to the report of the Board of Officers of the Corps of Engineers, consisting of Colonel J. D. Kurtz, General J. C. Duane, and General Q. A. Gillmore, appointed to examine and report upon the stability of the foundation, the soil on which the structure stands would be compressed three-sixteenths of an inch by the weight of the proposed height of this design, if the pressure was purely a perpendicular one; but when there is a heavy wind-storm the pressure upon one side of the shaft produces too great a weight upon the soil under the opposite side. While it was from choice, for harmony of design, that the base of the Monument is made in three pyramidal terraces, it at the same time gives an opportunity to so

brace the shaft as to make it perfectly safe, as the buttresses of the steps to the first terrace are continued to the face of the shaft, forming two strong buttress walls on each side, 120 feet long and 74 feet high above the ground next to the shaft; in addition to this the covering of each terrace forms a horizontal flange, which has a tendency to still further strengthen the whole work, and the shaft is firmly supported as if in a socket, so that it could only settle perpendicularly, and that but slightly; still, any possible contingency can be avoided by building the re-enforcement wall, as proposed in the recent report of the Board of Officers of the Engineer Corps, and a large portion of the expense of it would be utilized, as it would form the foundation for the face wall to the third terrace.

To make use of that portion of the Monument already built it necessitated a design which would have something of the obelisk appearance; but it has been my study to produce a monumental shaft which should be sufficiently original that it could be safely adopted as an American Monument. To enter more into a detail description of the design, commencing at the bottom, the base of the Monument is formed of three unequal pyramidal terraces, the lower one 20 feet high and 40 feet wide on the top; the second one 24 feet high and 30 feet wide; the third, or upper one, 30 feet high and 24 feet wide, making the combined height of these terraces 74 feet; the face of each terrace is to be on a different angle, formed by a line from the under side of the cornice at the top of the shaft, touching the upper corner of the terrace, and extending down to the next level. The length of each front of the lower terrace, in which is included the width of all the terraces doubled, and the width of the base of the shaft, will be about 250 feet.

Above the upper terrace is a casing of four feet in thickness and 40 feet high around the present shaft, to give it another base, and not to start the shaft too abruptly from the terraces. Above this again, at a proper proportioned distance, is a cornice, from which the shaft is divided by

deep grooves into what might be termed three pilasters, which extend up to the cornice or capital. This capital, including all its members, is 38 feet high, and has as a member a large flat cove of 17 feet, which is foliated, the originals for the foliage being natural plants of the country. The upper member of this capital forms a balustrade, from which visitors can have an extended view of the surrounding country. Above this the shaft finishes to a point, in the form of a pyramid, in overlapping sections, making the the whole height of the Monument, from the ground to the top, 530 feet.

The face of the terraces at the base are to be built of buttresses formed of massive blocks of granite, in courses of about four feet high each, the joints cut with V-shaped channels, and the face of the stone left in bold rock-work, the width of the buttresses to be from 12 to 8 feet, the widest for the lower terrace and the narrowest for the upper one, and to be built with the pyramidal angle, as above described; between these heavy buttresses the wall is to be plumb, and a pedestal of granite formed by the difference between the angle of the face and the plumb wall, with the additional projection of about two feet, thus leaving a space between the buttresses which will average 20 feet long and 12 feet high. These spaces, of which there will be a number, are to be filled with a light-colored sandstone, about five feet thick, left in rough rock-work, to be cut at some future time into colossal stone pictures, illustrating the scenes in which Washington took a prominent part, or such other historical events of the past and future of the country as the people may desire.

On the upper terrace facing east, with the granite casing of the lower part of the shaft for a background, and on a suitable pedestal, is to be a colossal statue of Washington, about 22 feet in height. On the west face may be a statue of John Adams, the first Vice-President, or such other statue or group as desired.

On the upper edge of each terrace is a massive cornice, which forms a balustrade four feet high above the covering

of the terrace, and over each buttress in the face of the terraces the cornice forms into a post or pedestal, the corner ones being from eight to six feet square, the larger ones on the lower terrace and the smaller on the upper one; and on these corner pedestals it is designed to place colossal groups of statuary. The other pedestals can be used for single statues, if desired.

On the outside of the Monument the terraces are reached by a flight of steps on the four sides of the lower terrace, and from the first to the second terrace the steps are on the north and south sides, and from the second to the third terrace the steps are on the east and west side; from the upper terrace ingress to the interior of the Monument is had by means of massive portals on the north and south sides. The steps are a subordinate feature in the design, and in no way detract from the necessary and desired massiveness of the terraces, and at the same time give opportunity for the execution of elaborate and delicate æsthetic detail and ornament, the rest of the work being of a colossal nature.

* The top of each terrace is to be formed by means of heavy wrought-iron girders and brick arches, averaging two feet in thickness, and covered with tile, or some similar material. The lower portion of the walls of the second and third terraces, which is below the covering, is to be opened by arches, supported on very massive posts, giving on the inside of the terraces thousands of feet in area and wall surface for tablets, grouping of tombs, and memorials of men and deeds connected with the past and future of this nation. All other countries of importance have a similar place, and although this idea is not a new one, it seemed to me this would be a suitable place for it, as this space will be well lighted by deep-recessed windows in the face of the terraces, above and partly hidden by the stone pictures between the buttresses, and also by prismatic lights in the covering of the first and second terraces, immediately in front of the pedestals to the stone pictures on these terraces.

The ventilation of this interior will be provided for by the casing of the shaft above the upper terrace being built hollow, and in the cornice of which will be openings for the escape of air; the sun the year round shining on the surface of this casing will sufficiently heat the air in the hollow space as to form a continued circulation.

Ingress to this interior of the terraces is had from the outside by a doorway under the steps leading from the ground to the first terrace. On the inside, the present doorway in that portion of the Monument now built will be used.

On the inside of the shaft will be an iron stairway, of easy grade and of straight run, each flight taking one side of the shaft, with quarter landings at each angle; and to every four flights, making a rise of about 50 feet, will be a gallery entirely around the inside of the shaft, and so continued until the top is reached. If desired, in the well inside the rail of the stairs there can be placed two steam elevators.

The upper portion of the interior of the shaft is to be lighted by windows, which will be placed in the channels before described as dividing the shaft into three pilasters; and therefore will not mar the exterior of the shaft as they otherwise would.

In following this description it will be seen that the work of the architect is finished when he has constructed the Monument with scientific skill to the outlines and proportions which give it impressive grandeur and stability, with such of the architectural details as are necessary, and which is also, comparatively, the inexpensive portion of it, being a matter of material and labor. But that which is to make the Monument historical, and give it the crowning of æsthetical excellence, is left to other minds and hands of future generations; and as none but those who, by constant and faithful study, could show by their work to have earned a high reputation as sculptors, should be invited to compete for the execution of any portion of the statuary or reliefs, the desire to place their mark upon such a Monu-



ment could only be an incentive to our sculptors of the future to excellence.

In making this design I have been prompted by the feeling which I believe is that of many—that in the designs which have been made for this Monument there has been a lack of originality in the general conception, and also in the combination of colossal grandeur with æsthetic and historic beauty. The measure of my success in this attempt will be decided by those who have been chosen to have immediate charge of the work, and by the criticising public, with whom I leave the result.

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